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October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month

Governor Rauner issues proclamation encouraging Illinoisans to stay safe online

SPRINGFIELD – Reports on computer hacks and online information breaches are in the news almost daily. While the news stories come and go, the effects of having your personal information compromised can be long-lasting. To highlight the importance of understanding and avoiding cyber risks, Governor Bruce Rauner has proclaimed October National Cyber Security Awareness Month in Illinois.

“Cybercrime is a very real threat across the globe,” Gov. Rauner said. “Here in Illinois, our new Department of Innovation and Technology is spearheading efforts to keep the state’s networks safe from the continual barrage of attacks. It’s equally important for individuals, schools, businesses, organizations and others to work to keep their online information secure.”

“Cybersecurity threat impacts all of us, and is truly a citizen safety issue,” said Hardik Bhatt, State CIO and Secretary Designate of the Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT). “Through Governor Rauner’s leadership, the state of Illinois is securing our technology infrastructure through partnerships with different levels of government and critical infrastructure partners. For a truly cyber-secure Illinois, we believe that the most important cybersecurity partnership for us is with our citizens.”

During the month, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies are joining to increase awareness of online risks and provide tips on what people can do to prevent problems.

“The Internet touches nearly every aspect of our daily lives,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “From computers and laptops at homes, schools and workplaces to smartphones and tablets, the ability to instantly connect with information and people around the world offers countless opportunities for everyone, including criminals. Fortunately, there are steps everyone can take to stay safe online.”

Joseph said the *Stop. Think. Connect. Campaign* is a global safety awareness campaign to help people stay safe online. The campaign offers many tips and information for online security, including:

- Keep security software current to defend against viruses, malware and other online threats.
- Protect all devices that connect to the Internet, including computers, smartphones, gaming systems and other web-enabled devices.
- Use security software to scan USBs and other external devices for viruses and malware.
- Make passwords long and strong by combine capital and lowercase letters with number and symbols.
- Have unique passwords for every account.
- Avoid suspicious links in emails, tweets, posts and online advertising, which can be the way for cybercriminals to access your computer.
- When banking and shopping online, check to be sure the site is security enabled (https:// means the site takes extra measures to secure your information).
- Protect your work, music, photos and other digital information by making an electronic copy and storing it safely.

More information about cyber security is available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.